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THE PREMISES

By Leo Szilard

The following is a very rough draft of the premises on which the Council may be expected to base the statement of its general objectives, which it may issue from time to time for the guidance of the members of the Movement.

The Council would state from time to time also what it regards to be the attainable immediate objectives. No amount of political pressure brought to bear on the Administration can force the Administration to do something that no one inside the Administration wants done. It follows that for an immediate objective to be attainable it is necessary that it have some support inside the Administration. In selecting the immediate objectives it may advocate, the Council would first ascertain how much support for these objectives could be generated inside of the Administration.

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The problem which the bomb poses to the world cannot be solved except by abolishing war, and the overall objective is to have an enduring peace in a livable world. This might be attainable within the next 25 years, whereas a just peace may not be an attainable objective in the predictable future and if we stubbornly persist in asking for peace with justice we may not attain either peace or justice.

It is necessary to abolish war in order to have a livable world, but it is not sufficient. In order to have a livable world we must not only have peace but also a certain minimum standard of stable and effective government, economic prosperity and individual freedom in the less developed regions of the world. The problems which this involves would of necessity come within the scope of the concern of the Council.

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Conceivably, war could be abolished within the predictable future within the framework of a general political settlement through general disarmament. General disarmament does not, however, automatically rule out the possibility of war. In a generally disarmed world, with inspection going full blast, armies equipped with machine guns could spring up, so to speak, overnight.

The question of just how secure America and other nations would be in such a disarmed world would depend on the means that would be adopted in order to secure the peace. Few Americans in responsible positions have a clear notion at present of how the peace may be secured in a disarmed world, and therefore most of them remain uncertain of whether or not they would really want to have general disarmament.

The Russians are strongly motivated toward general disarmament by the economic savings which would result from it and it stands to reason that this should be so. A much larger fraction of industrial production is absorbed by arms in Russia than in America, and the needs of the consumers are satisfied to a much higher degree in America than in Russia. In the circumstances, Russia might be willing to go a long way towards reaching the kind of political settlement which is a prerequisite for disarmament, in return for obtaining general disarmament. But until such time as Americans in responsible positions become clear in their own mind that they really want disarmament they are not in a position successfully to negotiate with Russia an acceptable political settlement because they are not in a position to offer Russia the disarmament that she would want to obtain in return.

In any negotiations centering on the issue of disarmament the problem of inspection is likely to loom large. No major progress is likely to be made on this, or any other, issue involved until Americans in responsible positions are sure in their mind that they would want general disarmament under conditions which Russia could be reasonably expected to accept.

If America and Russia were able to reach a meeting of the minds on the issue of how peace may be secured in a disarmed world, such a meeting of minds could open the door to serious negotiations of the other issues involved in disarmament. This is a point which the Council may have to devote its attention.

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Until such time as the peace of the world may be secured through a disarmament agreement providing for adequate inspection and means which will be adequate for securing the peace in a disarmed world, we cannot rule out the possibility that a war may break out which neither America nor Russia wants.

Reducing the probability that such a war may break out must be one of the immediate objectives of the Council.

1.) A war that neither America nor Russia wanted may break out as a result of an all-out atomic arms race, and avoidance of such an arms race must be regarded as an immediate political objective.

We would be provoking an all-out atomic arms race if America were to maintain the threat that in case of war with Russia she would attempt to shift the power balance in her own favor by mounting an attack against the rocket bases and the strategic air bases of Russia. There is an increasingly influential school of thought within the Administration which advocates that America should use the threat of a "first strike against bases" in case of war as an instrument of her foreign policy -- in order to deter Russia from obstructing objectives of our foreign policy. The Council must oppose this school of thought.

2.) A war that neither Russia nor America wants may break out if either America or the Soviet Union resorts to force in order to extend her sphere of influence. If America had openly intervened in the attempted invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles and had sent in the Marines, she could have conquered Cuba but the Russians might have responded by occupying West Berlin and there is no way of telling whether or not a Russian response of this kind would have resulted in war. If a war is to be avoided that neither Russia nor America wants, both countries must refrain from resorting to force, in attempting to reach their foreign policy objectives.

3.) Quemoy and Matsu represent one of the danger spots where a war might break out, and these islands ought to be evacuated without further delay before they may come under attack.

4.) The danger of a resort to force could be reduced if America and Russia stopped fighting meaningless battles in the Cold War. In this regard America could and should take the initiative, and the Council may have to devote considerable attention to it.

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If a war were to break out it could quickly escalate into an all-out war in the absence of any clear policy of how to keep the war limited until such time as it becomes possible to arrange for a cessation of hostilities. The adoption of policies aimed at preventing the escalation of a war must also be among the immediate objectives pursued by the Council.

5.) The danger that a war might escalate could be reduced if America and Russia adopted the policy of refraining from using atomic bombs in case of war unless atomic bombs were used against her. As far as manpower and economic resources are concerned, Europe is not inferior to Russia, and within three to five years Europe could build up conventional forces to a level where the West might resolve to forego the use of atomic bombs in case of war. It is rather doubtful, however, whether the outlawing of atomic bombs would be an immediately attainable objective, at the present time.

Moreover, the outlawing of atomic bombs in itself would not prevent an escalation of the war, for if there were a resort to force, even if at first only conventional weapons were used, subsequently the side which is about to lose the war would presumably find it impossible to abide by its pledge and would resort to the use of atomic bombs.

If there is a resort to force, the means which are employed are, of course, important, and the refraining from using atomic bombs could be a very important factor in preventing escalation. But even more important than the means employed would be the purposes for which force is employed. If force is used for the purpose of changing the power balance and thereby to attain certain foreign policy objectives, then escalation of the war may be inevitable no matter what the means that may be initially employed.

An example for this is what happened in Korea. When North Korean troops moved into South Korea, America intervened and pushed the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel. If America had been satisfied with the use of force for the purpose of making the conquest difficult and with luck to prevent it, the war would have ended at this point. But when American troops crossed the 38th parallel in order to unify Korea under free elections, the People's Republic of China intervened.

If, in case of war, escalation is to be avoided, both the American Government and the Government of the Soviet Union must clearly understand that, today, if force is used and is resisted with force, the use of force must only have the aim of preventing an easy conquest and extracting a price -- if necessary, a rather high price. The aim must not be victory or anything approaching victory; it must not be a change in the power balance that would enable either America or the Soviet Union to bring about a settlement in its own favor.

Within this frame of reference the Council would have to consider the possibility that the Administration might be willing to adopt two closely inter-related policies which might be phrased as follows:

6.) America's Atomic Strategic Striking Forces shall be maintained only for the purpose of protecting America and her allies by being able to retaliate in case either America or her allies were attacked by bombs.

7.) In case of war, if America found herself forced to use atomic bombs against troops in combat, she would do so only on her own side of the pre-war boundary as long as the Soviet Union imposed the same restraint on her use of the bomb.

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